VH-71 PRESIDENTIAL HELICOPTER REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT

Marine Helicopter Squadron One (HMX-1) is chartered to provide safe and timely transportation for the President and Vice President of the United States, foreign heads of state, and others as directed by the White House Military Office. When the President is onboard Marine One, this aircraft is the Commander-in-Chief's primary command-and-control platform and must provide him with the flexibility and capabilities necessary to execute the duties of his office. The global nature of these commitments requires HMX-1 aircraft to deploy worldwide and operate in varying environmental and climatic conditions without mission degradation.

Currently, two types of aircraft are utilized by HMX-1 for the presidential support mission: the VH-3D and VH-60N. Numerous modifications and improvements have been incorporated in both aircraft over the past several years to accommodate emerging technologies and additional White House requirements. Although they are robust platforms that enjoy some of the best safety records in the fleet, the VH-3D and VH-60N are aging designs with a finite ability to incorporate new technology. Given the dramatically changed nature of the threat environment since 11 September 2001, the need for improved communications and survival capabilities has grown beyond the VH fleet's structural and performance growth ability.

The Presidential Helicopter Replacement Program (VXX) will replace the VH-3D and VH-60N through an evolutionary acquisition approach to meet schedule requirements of an Initial Operating Capability in October 2009. The goal of the VXX development is to achieve a safe, survivable and capable vertical lift aircraft while providing uninterrupted communications with all required agencies. Its capabilities, which will be delivered in two increments, are divided into four functional areas: operational performance, communications/navigation, survivability and executive accommodations. VXX will have increased capabilities in these areas, while retaining core capabilities carried forward from the VH-3D and VH-60N. The aircraft was designated as VH-71A. The VH-71A will have a 350 nautical mile range, a maximum airspeed of 140 knots, and be capable of carrying 14 passengers.